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Educational Writings

REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

School publicity campaigns.—In the administration of public affairs, whether federal, state, city, or local community, the greatest desideratum is mutual confidence and understanding between officials and their supporting constituency. This relationship has not been considered necessary in the administration of school affairs until within very recent years; but it is now being fully evidenced wherever the referendum has to be invoked to secure increased financial support for public schools.

The failure of many communities within recent months to ratify bond issues and to increase tax budgets for schools cannot be explained either on the ground of waning interest in education, or on the ground of unwillingness adequately to support needed schools. On the contrary, it is to be explained in terms of official dereliction in properly informing the public regarding educational needs, policies, and achievements.

As an aid to school administrators who are compelled to secure increased financial support for schools through the approval of local taxpayers, a recent report¹ has been issued which shows the need for conducting well-planned publicity campaigns of education in behalf of schools preliminary to submitting such propositions to a referendum. Even where the power of increasing the school budget rests solely with the administrative bodies, it is considered good educational policy to inform the public regarding the needs of its schools, rather than to be compelled to make *ex post facto* explanations in defense of administrative acts publicly disapproved.

The report describes in detail the technique of organizing, directing, and conducting school publicity campaigns, and gives many examples of publicity materials that have been used with success in such campaigns. It should prove to be an indispensable handbook for administrative officers who need assistance in developing and maintaining wholesome public opinion in support of schools.

W. C. REAVIS

Age and the improvement of mental functions.—A great many attempts have been made to determine the nature or the degree of difference in certain abili-

¹ CARTER ALEXANDER and W. W. THEISEN, *Publicity Campaigns for Better School Support*. Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York: World Book Co., 1921. Pp. 164.

ties or traits which may be regarded as characteristic of the mental make-up of the individual at different stages of maturity. There are relatively few studies, however, which report the results of comparable measurements of such attributes of the same individuals at earlier and later age periods. A recent report¹ of this type is based on the author's findings in a study involving the retesting of the same group of children after one year, and again at the end of the second year.

The children tested ranged in age from nine to fifteen, and were enrolled in grades four to nine of the training school of the State Teachers College, Mankato, Minnesota. The tests administered included well-known standard tests relating to speed and quality of handwriting, spelling, the fundamental operations and reasoning in arithmetic, composition, language, and reading. Tests of auditory memory, intelligence, reasoning, ability to follow directions, etc., were likewise given. In all, twenty types of tests were administered, seventeen of which were included in each retesting as well as in the initial examination. Of the 171 children included in the study, 78 took all of the tests twice, and 67 took all of them three times. The testing was done in May of the years 1918, 1919, and 1920.

The author recognizes the fact that since all of the children of nine or ten years of age who were tested had obviously made normal or more rapid progress through the first four grades, these do not constitute a fairly random sampling of school population for their age groups. On the other hand, since no pupils above the ninth grade were tested, the older groups doubtless lacked a few of the normal number of children of superior ability.

The results of the tests are shown in the tables by age and by sex for each test. The amount of progress made by any pupil during the year intervening between two tests was determined by subtracting his score on a given test from his score on the same test a year later. These improvement scores are likewise shown by age and by sex for each test. In order to offset the effects of varying values in the units of the different tests and of varying numbers in the different age groups tested, as well as to make possible a number of comparisons of results obtained in this study and other similar studies, the gross gains of boys and of girls in each test at each age are divided by the average of the standard deviations of ages eleven, twelve, and thirteen.

As a further means of making more reliable inferences from the results of the testing, the tests are themselves classified on four different bases, according as there appeared to be evidence of (1) similar functions, (2) the presence or absence of high scores, (3) influence of school instruction, (4) ability required to make initial score. By averaging the standard deviation gains for each age and sex on the tests thus grouped, comparisons were made possible as to the rate of improvement in the different types of mental functions tested, the

¹ FOWLER DELL BROOKS, *Changes in Mental Traits with Age*. "Teachers College Contributions to Education," No. 116. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1921. Pp. 84.

rate of improvement in tests showing the influence of school instruction, etc. The scores are also analyzed to show the correlations between mental traits at different ages, between gains in different groups of functions for a two-year interval, and between intellectual ability and mental improvement.

The following are some of the conclusions which seem to be supported by the results of these tests:

The rate of gain, determined by annual retests of 171 children, ages nine to fifteen, in grades four to nine, using a battery of eighteen tests is practically a straight-line affair, decreasing some at the later ages.

The rates of improvement for boys and girls suggest no significant sex differences.

The correlations between abilities at a two-year interval in the four groups of functions (simpler, memory, higher, and informational) are found to be high, the corrected coefficients indicating that these abilities are a relatively permanent endowment.

Gains or improvement and I.Q. are found to have low positive correlations in three cases—simpler, memory, and higher—and a low negative correlation, practically zero, in the case of the informational group. This latter is due to inadequate testing of the superior children. . . . Further experiments, carefully planned and carried out, are needed to determine the extent of the correlations between intellectual ability and rate of improvement [pp. 83-84].

The monograph includes a survey of the previous experiments that have attacked the problem in similar manner. The results of certain of these have been recalculated to permit direct comparisons with the results of this study. The data of other tests have in some instances been combined with those of this study as a means of increasing the number of cases for a given age group. There is every evidence that the investigation has been carried through with great care, and that the results have been subjected to the most painstaking analysis. The report is interesting from the point of view of the results shown as well as of the procedure employed.

N. B. HENRY

An experimental study of ideals.—Although the development of ideals has frequently been made a subject of discussion in educational literature, there have been few attempts to establish an experimental basis for their consideration. The difficulty of securing any direct objective measurement of ideals is so evident that it has caused many students to regard the problem as not susceptible to an experimental method of attack. A recent monograph¹ by Dr. Paul F. Voelker, which describes an attempt to ascertain the growth of an ideal by an indirect measurement of its functioning in behavior, is, therefore, of considerable significance.

In the first half of the monograph the author makes an analysis of some of the objectives of social education, foremost among which are such elements

¹ PAUL FREDERICK VOELKER, *The Function of Ideals and Attitudes in Social Education*. "Teachers College Contributions to Education," No. 112. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1921. Pp. 126.